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SHATNER CONFIRMS CONTRIBUTION FOR MIA RAID
LOS ANGELES

A four-man team, funded by private donors, entered Laos last fall in a failed attempt to rescue U.S. prisoners of war believed to be still alive, one team member claimed Monday.

Actor William Shatner confirmed he gave one member of the group \$10,000, but said it was for the man's life story as a possible movie script. He said the man told him he was "contemplating" a POW rescue attempt.

A Defense Department spokesman said officials knew the mission was planned and advised the group the operation was illegal. The spokesman could not confirm that the mission had taken place.

The Nov. 27 mission was aborted when the North Vietnamese were tipped off and ambushed the party, chasing three of them out of Laos and capturing one, former Green Beret Sgt. Charles J. Patterson said in a telephone interview from his home in Dinuba, Calif.

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"As far as I know there was no government money," Patterson said, claiming the government had planned two earlier raids led by Gritz, but had halted them before they could be carried out.

Defense Department spokesman Maj. Bob Shields said the department had learned of plans for the Gritz mission through "sources" that he would not identify. But he said he could not verify that the mission occurred.

"We know his group and we know his people," Shields said in a telephone interview from Washington. "They, I think, are convinced there are some POWs in there."

"We let it be known to him that this was illegal" and the government would not assist him, Shields said, adding that Gritz was contacted through intermediaries.

The Los Angeles Times on Monday quoted Gritz as saying he received help from the FBI, the CIA, and the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok.

But State Department spokesman Alan Romberg said in Washington, "The U.S. government was not involved in any way and neither supports nor condones such activities. We consider such activities unhelpful to our effort to make progress on POW and MIA (missing in action) matters."

"We have no connection with Gritz," CIA spokesman Dale Peterson said in Washington. "That's the only statement from the CIA."

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